



Harrisburg Patriot News (2-4) Cabot admits its Dimock water arsenic claim was a mistake

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Cabot admits its Dimock water arsenic claim was a mistake

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The arsenic Cabot Oil & Gas recently said was not in the water in Dimock wasn't even arsenic.

It's the Abbott and Costello "Who's On First?" routine, Marcellus style.

Cabot drilled wells in Dimock.

Local residents' well water suddenly began to spit and fizzle with natural gas.

Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection fined Cabot and made the company make arrangements for paying for water treatment systems at the homes.

Some residents refused, choosing instead to sue Cabot.

They said their wells were also contaminated with chemicals used in drilling.

Cabot said that wasn't so.

DEP agreed.

Lots of tests were done.

An independent study by researchers at Duke University found gas but no chemicals.

The residents did their own tests, and took their concerns to the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA agreed with DEP.

Then it didn't.

The EPA announced it would do its own testing and it would arrange for emergency water for four homes.

It said it was doing that because some of the old test results concerned them.

One test indicated a high level of arsenic.

Cabot said the arsenic reading didn't come from the Dimock water, but rather from the Montrose public water system in water delivered to Dimock residents.

Pennsylvania American Water, which owns the Montrose public water system, said that was bunk.

Their water doesn't contain any arsenic, they said.

Cabot stood by its claim.

Then it didn't.

On Friday, Cabot announced, "Our review found a transcription error revealing that the values for arsenic and barium were transposed in the report. There was no arsenic found in this sample from the Montrose public water supply. We apologize for this error."

Cabot still thinks the EPA should stay out of the issue.

"We confirmed once again, that the water sample originated from the Montrose area public water supply and therefore is not representative of the well water for the four residences mentioned in the EPA report," the company said. "The transcription error is an example of why a single anomalous result should not be used as the basis of a decision when a volume of data exists."

The EPA, it turns out, made its decision -- at least in part -- based on an error in a test on water that didn't come from Dimock.

The water company said it's glad Cabot found the error and issued the correction.

But added "We feel they should have done a more thorough analysis of the information prior to issuing such a serious allegation."

"Customers put their trust in us," they said.